

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

104th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 464

September 26, 1995, 5:17 p.m.
Page S-14271 Temp. Record

VA-HUD APPROPRIATIONS/National & Community Service (AmeriCorps)

SUBJECT: Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for fiscal year 1996 . . . H.R. 2099. Mikulski amendment No. 2781.

ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 47-52

SYNOPSIS: As reported, H.R. 2099, the Departments of Veterans Affairs and Housing and Urban Development, and Independent Agencies Appropriations Bill for (fiscal year) FY 1996, will provide a net of \$80.98 billion in new budget authority, which is \$8.9 billion under the Administration's request, \$1.3 billion more than provided in the House-passed bill, and \$8.9 billion less than provided in FY 1995.

The Mikulski amendment would provide \$425 million in funding for the Corporation for National and Community Service (AmeriCorps), \$335 million of which would be available for obligation from September 1, 1996 through August 21, 1997. Obligations would have to be delayed because of the proposed funding offsets. Those offsets would come from cutting unobligated balances and recapturing appropriations for the Annual Contributions for Assisted Housing and the Renewal of Expiring Section 8 Subsidies accounts.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

The Mikulski amendment would restore funding to the Corporation for National and Community Service, which is the AmeriCorps volunteer program started by President Clinton to get young people involved in helping their communities. We support this amendment because this program works. Local organizations, most of which are nonprofit, pick projects in four basic areas: education; public health; the environment; and safety. Over 1,000 projects are ongoing nationwide, with 20,000 volunteers. For a modest stipend and a vouchers to attend college, these young volunteers are making a difference. In Montgomery County, Maryland, they are engaged in a community education and outreach project that addresses the need for crime control, crime prevention, and the reduction of fear in six underserved communities. In Vermont, they work in a project called the Vermont Antihunger, Nutrition,

(See other side)

YEAS (47)			NAYS (52)			NOT VOTING (1)	
Republicans (6 or 11%)	Democrats (41 or 89%)		Republicans (47 or 89%)	Democrats (5 or 11%)		Republicans (1)	Democrats (0)
Campbell	Akaka	Johnston	Abraham	Hutchison	Byrd	Gramm ⁻²	
Chafee	Baucus	Kennedy	Ashcroft	Inhofe	Exon		
Cohen	Biden	Kerrey	Bennett	Kassebaum	Feingold		
Jeffords	Bingaman	Kerry	Bond	Kempthorne	Hollings		
Snowe	Boxer	Lautenberg	Brown	Kyl	Kohl		
Specter	Bradley	Leahy	Burns	Lott			
	Breaux	Levin	Coats	Lugar			
	Bryan	Lieberman	Cochran	Mack			
	Bumpers	Mikulski	Coverdell	McCain			
	Conrad	Moseley-Braun	Craig	McConnell			
	Daschle	Moynihan	D'Amato	Murkowski			
	Dodd	Murray	DeWine	Nickles			
	Dorgan	Nunn	Dole	Packwood			
	Feinstein	Pell	Domenici	Pressler			
	Ford	Pryor	Faircloth	Roth			
	Glenn	Reid	Frist	Santorum			
	Graham	Robb	Gorton	Shelby			
	Harkin	Rockefeller	Grams	Simpson			
	Heflin	Sarbanes	Grassley	Smith			
	Inouye	Simon	Gregg	Stevens			
		Wellstone	Hatch	Thomas			
			Hatfield	Thompson			
			Helms	Thurmond			
				Warner			
						EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:	
						1—Official Business	
						2—Necessarily Absent	
						3—Illness	
						4—Other	
						SYMBOLS:	
						AY—Announced Yea	
						AN—Announced Nay	
						PY—Paired Yea	
						PN—Paired Nay	

Compiled and written by the staff of the Republican Policy Committee—Don Nickles, Chairman

and Empowerment Corps. In Washington State, they have formed a conservation corps to do things like watershed restoration, reforestation, and oil spill response. In Massachusetts, YouthBuild Boston puts 18-year-old to 24-year-old volunteers to work renovating buildings to provide low-income housing. The list goes on and on. According to Harvard Professor Bob Putnam, there has been a sharp drop in the last 20 years in the number of people who volunteer in their communities. We need to reverse that trend. Young people need to learn to value and to serve their communities. This program serves that end, but the bill before us will eliminate all funding for it. The Mikulski amendment would restore \$425 million. This amendment merits our support.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

A paid volunteer strikes us as something of an oxymoron. In this case, it is an extremely expensive oxymoron. According to the General Accounting Office, this program costs an average of \$26,700 a year for each volunteer. Some projects funded by this program cost more than \$60,000 per participant. Each "volunteer" is paid, on average, more than \$13,000 per year. Our opposition to this program is based on the fact that we cannot find any justification for a Federal volunteer program that costs more than \$26,000 for each participant. We do not mean in any way to belittle our colleagues' motivations--they are very sincere in wanting to encourage voluntarism, and the programs they have described are doing good work. However, there are many more cost-effective programs. This program runs almost entirely with Federal funds; private matching funds come to only about 8 percent.

There are more than 80 million Americans who engage in volunteer work. These are not 80 million wealthy Americans who we are talking about, obviously; they are mostly poor and middle-class people working to make their communities better. People in this country from all across the economic spectrum always have volunteered in churches, schools, and community organizations, and we are confident they always will. We do not need a program to pay 20,000 low-income Americans to volunteer in order to keep this community spirit alive. Our colleagues may respond that this program also gives more low-income kids a chance to go to college, but we do not find that reason at all persuasive, considering that if we eliminated it and put all its funding into Pell Grants we could give 360,000 more low-income kids a chance to go to college instead of 20,000.

Our colleagues, and this Administration, are going to have to admit that the AmeriCorps program has been an utter disaster, and they are going to have to work with us to reform it, or we will insist on eliminating it. Some similar so-called volunteer programs, like VISTA and Peace Corps, have managed to operate much more efficiently. We are willing to try to improve this program, and we have offered to work with the Administration on such efforts, but our offers have been ignored. For now, we have no choice but to vote against funding, though we are still open to considering reforms.